



# NORFOLK

## City Planning Commission 2014 Report to City Council

### ***Planning Commission***

*Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman*

*Ramona Austin*

*Andria McClellan*

*Matthew Hales*

*Dr. Dan Neumann*

*Nikita Houchins*

*Martin Thomas, Jr., Vice Chairman*

*Approved: February 12, 2015  
Department of City Planning*



## Chairman's Message

February 12, 2015

To the Honorable Mayor and Council  
City of Norfolk, Virginia

Ladies and Gentlemen:

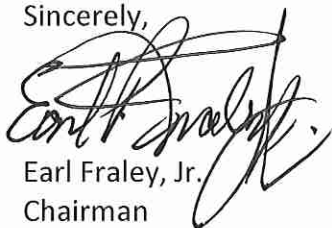
On behalf of the City Planning Commission I am pleased to forward this summary report of activities for 2014. This was another busy year for the Commission. It was also a year of change, as the new Architectural Review Board began its work in the spring. The number of planning and zoning applications reviewed by the Commission continued its steady rise, and are beginning to approach the pre-recession levels. The Commission also worked with staff to complete several major revisions to the Zoning Ordinance, including most notably the new parking regulations.

The Planning Commission is excited to have begun in July the process of re-writing the Zoning Ordinance as a whole. The Zoning Ordinance Rewrite is a key step in implementing *plaNorfolk2030* and represents the Commission's number one priority over the next few years.

The Planning Commission is also proud to be taking a leadership role in furthering the City's efforts to make Norfolk one of the most resilient cities in America. These efforts begin for the Commission with the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, which is being built around the concept of resiliency. The Commission is also very much involved in advancing the city's flood mitigation efforts and the various citywide initiatives aimed at increasing neighborhood vitality.

As always, 2015 looks to be a busy, but ultimately rewarding, year for the Planning Commission. We appreciate the opportunity you have given us to help plan the future of this great city and to work with such a great staff of professional planners.

Sincerely,



Earl Fraley, Jr.  
Chairman

CC: Marcus D. Jones, City Manager  
George M. Homewood, AICP CFM, Planning Director

## Norfolk City Planning Commission

The Norfolk City Planning Commission is a seven-member body, appointed by the City Council, responsible for the review of land use and zoning matters for the City of Norfolk. The Commission makes recommendations on various matters to City Council, which is ultimately responsible for making a final decision. The City Planning Commission is also responsible for the development and implementation of the City's General Plan.

Planning Commission members in 2014 were: Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman; Ramona Austin; Lisa Chandler; Lorraine K. Flood; Matthew Hales; Nikita Houchins; Brad Law; Andria McClellan; Dr. Dan Neumann; and Martin Thomas, Jr., Vice Chairman. Ms. Chandler, Ms. Flood, and Mr. Law left the Commission during the year. They were replaced by Ms. McClellan, Ms. Austin, and Mr. Houchins, who began their terms in January, July, and September, respectively. George Homewood, Planning Director, served as Executive Secretary to the Commission.

The Planning Commission met on 22 separate occasions in 2014, convening the second and fourth Thursday of each month, excepting November and December, where only one meeting was held to accommodate the holidays. Staff also conducts a monthly field trip for Commissioners, providing an opportunity to visit each site on that month's agenda. The table below illustrates each Commissioner's attendance for the year.

|                                   | Meetings in Attendance | Meetings Absent |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Earl Fraley, Jr., Chairman</b> | 21                     | 1               |
| <b>Ramona Austin**</b>            | 9                      | 1               |
| <b>Lisa Chandler*</b>             | 1                      | 1               |
| <b>Lorraine K. Flood*</b>         | 4                      | 3               |
| <b>Matthew Hales</b>              | 18                     | 4               |
| <b>Nikita Houchins**</b>          | 6                      | 0               |
| <b>Brad Law*</b>                  | 9                      | 5               |
| <b>Andria McClellan**</b>         | 19                     | 2               |
| <b>Dr. Dan Neumann</b>            | 21                     | 1               |
| <b>Martin Thomas, Jr.</b>         | 22                     | 0               |

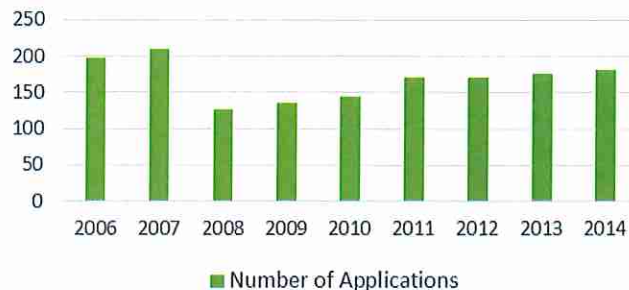
\* Left the Commission during 2014. \*\*Began service on the Commission during 2014.

In 2014, the Planning Commission processed 182 planning and zoning applications and 110 Architectural Review Board items. Additionally, the Commission considered presentations on many other topics throughout the year, including potential light rail extension, parking, early childhood education and poverty reduction, landscaping and open space provisions, signage, flooding, performance standards, bicycle planning, *plaNorfolk2030* implementation, and the Zoning Ordinance re-write. The Commission also participated in a day-long training session covering the roles and responsibilities of Planning Commissioners in Virginia.

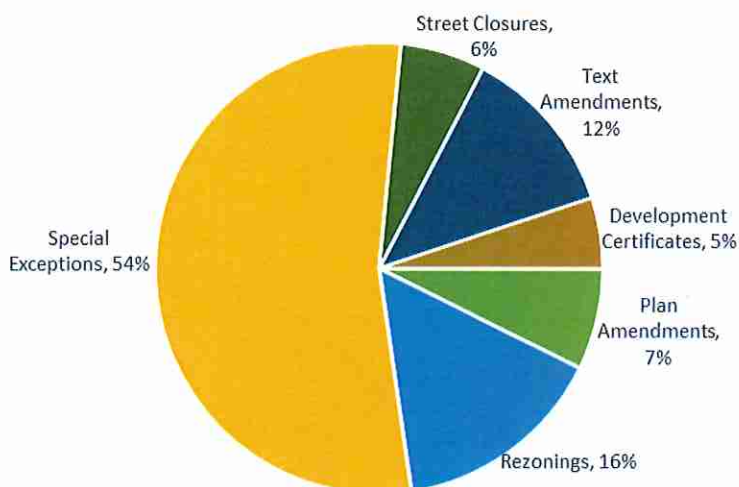
## Applications Reviewed – 2006-2014

The number of applications to the Planning Commission continued to increase in 2014, with 182 compared to 177 in 2013. 2014 continued the post-recession upward trend of the past few years, rising well above the 127 applications processed in 2008 at the bottom of the recession. A total of 1,515 applications have been submitted to the Planning Commission since 2006, an average of 168 per year. While the number of applications has not quite reached pre-recession levels, there has been a steady increase since 2008.

Applications Received, 2006-2014

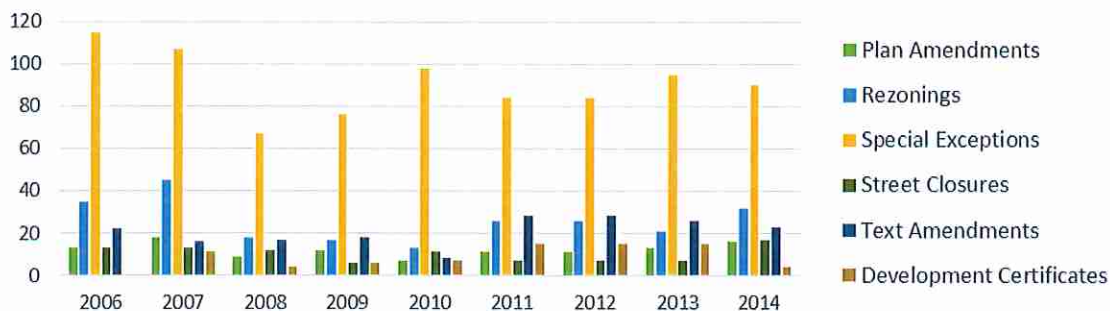


Types of Applications, 2006-2014



The special exception has been the most common application type, consistently making up at least half of all applications each year. All other types of application vary wildly from year-to-year, with only rezonings showing a clear trend, with obvious peaks before the recession and after the recovery, and a clear bottom during the recession.

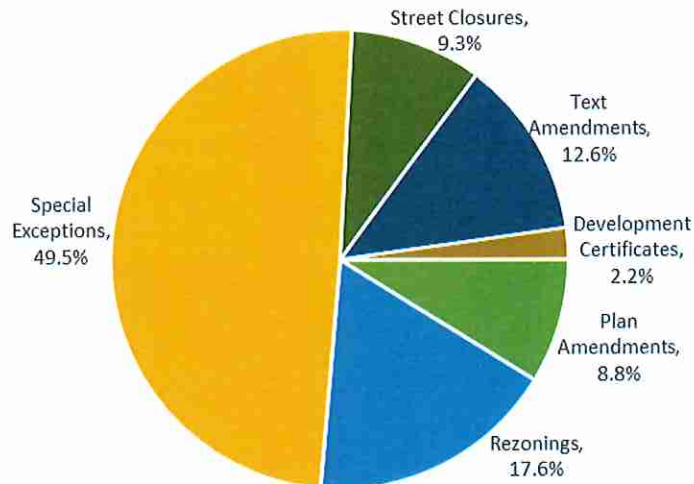
Planning Commission Activity, 2006-2014



## Applications Reviewed in 2014 – Planning & Zoning

The 182 planning and zoning applications submitted to the Planning Commission in 2014 represent a small increase from the 177 applications reviewed in 2013. Special exception applications, just under 50% of the total, were once again by far the most common type of application processed. The following table illustrates the disposition of all applications processed in 2014.

Types of Applications, 2014



|                           | CPC Recommendation |               |            |          |           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
|                           | Total              | Percent       | Approval   | Denial   | Withdrawn | % Approval   |
| Plan Amendments           | 16                 | 8.8%          | 16         | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Rezoning                  | 32                 | 17.6%         | 31         | 1        | 0         | 96.9%        |
| Special Exceptions        | 90                 | 49.5%         | 86         | 1        | 3         | 95.6%        |
| Street Closures           | 17                 | 9.3%          | 17         | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Text Amendments           | 23                 | 12.6%         | 23         | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Development Certificates* | 4                  | 2.2%          | 4          | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>182</b>         | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>177</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>97.3%</b> |

\*Includes Downtown, Granby and PCO Development Certificates, and Institutional Development Plans

Recommended Actions, 2014

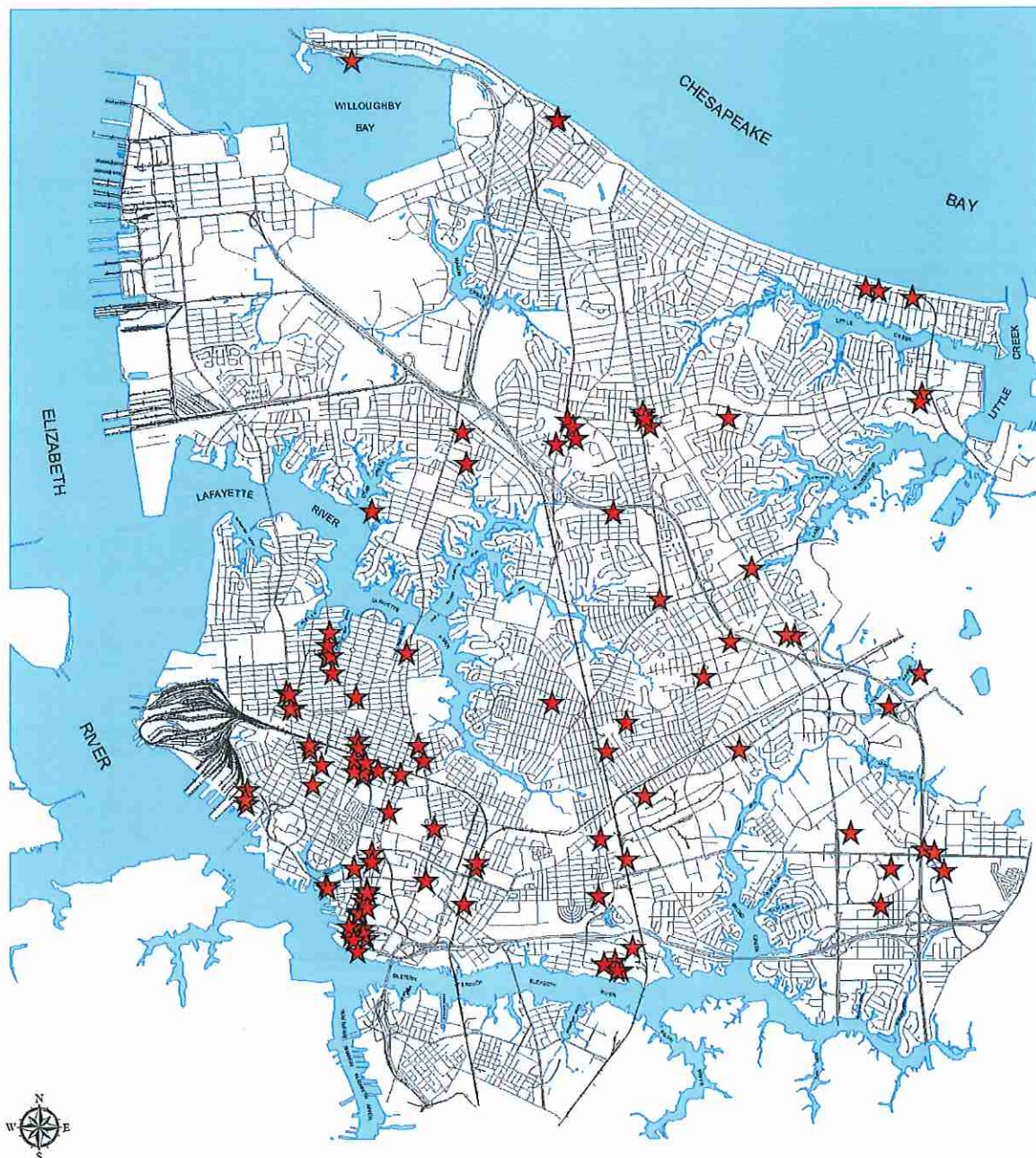


Planning Commission recommended approval on over 97% of the applications submitted in 2014, only voting to recommend denial of two items. Three items were withdrawn before Commission could vote on them. The 97% approval rate, an increase from the 91% in 2013, matches 2010's approval rate for the highest on record.

## Applications Reviewed in 2014 – Planning & Zoning

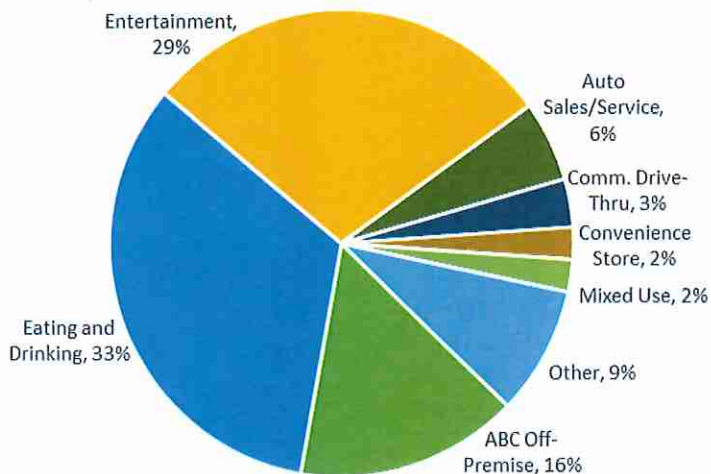
The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of planning and zoning applications reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2014. Not reflected on this map are the 24 items that affected either the entire City or all or part of a neighborhood.

### Planning and Zoning Applications, 2014



## Applications Reviewed in 2014 – Special Exceptions

Special Exception Applications, 2014



Special exceptions are the most common type of application considered by the Planning Commission, representing just under 50% of all agenda items in 2014. More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of these applications (76%) relate to the sale of alcoholic beverages, either for off-premise consumption, on-premise consumption, or as a part of an entertainment establishment (all but two of which requested the sale of alcoholic beverages

along with the entertainment), a notably higher percentage than in recent years. Commission only recommended denial of a single special exception in 2014, far fewer than in an average year, while three applications were withdrawn prior to review. In total, almost 96% of special exception applications received were recommended for approval.

|                             | Total     | Percent       | CPC Recommendation |          |           |              |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
|                             |           |               | Approval           | Denial   | Withdrawn | % Approval   |
| ABC Off-premise             | 14        | 15.6%         | 14                 | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Eating and Drinking         | 30        | 33.3%         | 30                 | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Entertainment               | 26        | 28.9%         | 26                 | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Auto Sales/Service          | 5         | 5.6%          | 3                  | 1        | 1         | 60.0%        |
| Commercial Drive-Through    | 3         | 3.3%          | 3                  | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Convenience Store, 24-Hours | 2         | 2.2%          | 2                  | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Mixed Use                   | 2         | 2.2%          | 2                  | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Other*                      | 8         | 8.9%          | 6                  | 0        | 2         | 75.0%        |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>90</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>86</b>          | <b>1</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>95.6%</b> |

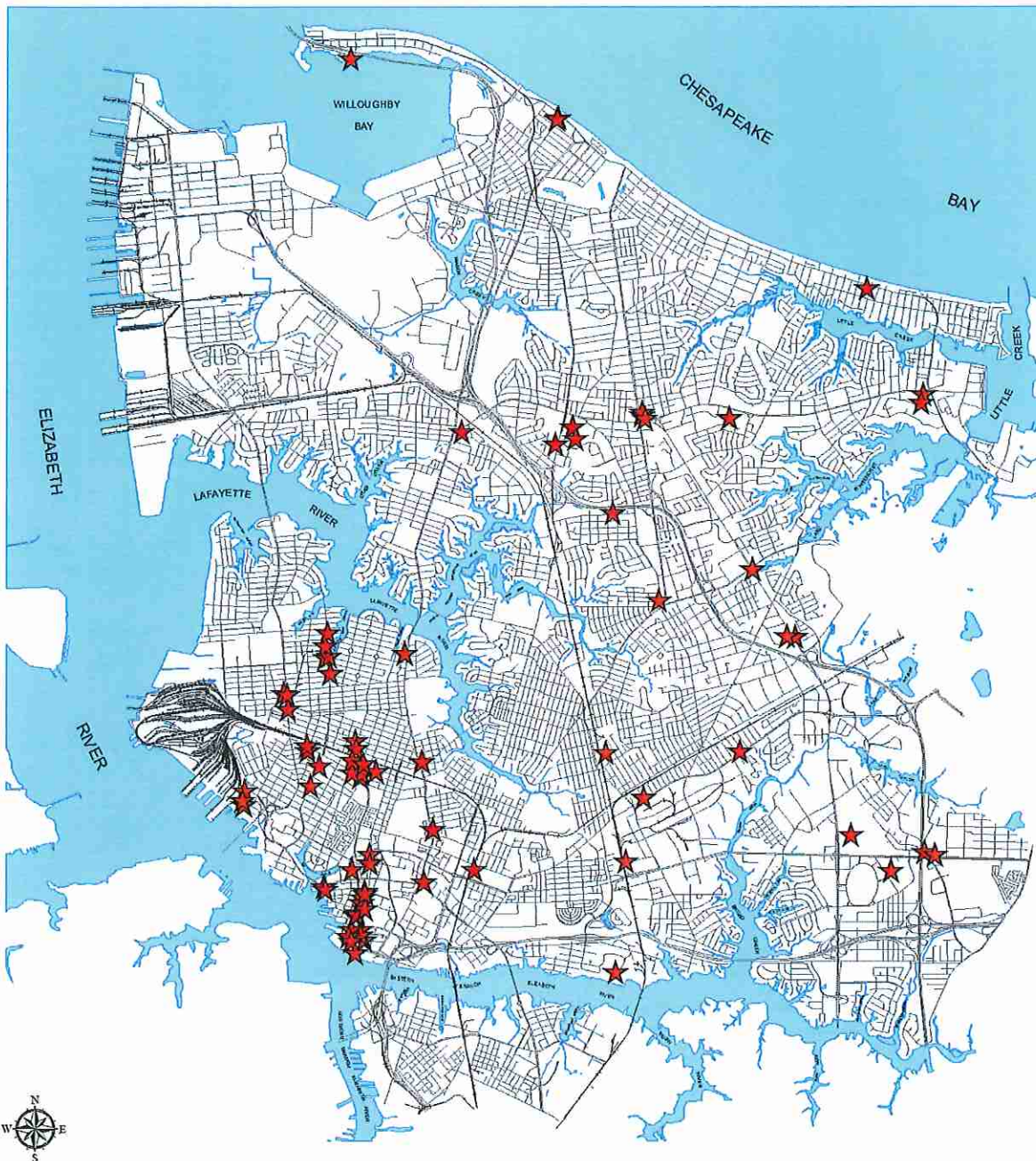
\*Includes special exceptions for communications tower, flag lot, gas station, commercial indoor recreation center, kennel, multifamily development, off-lot parking, and retail after midnight.

Of the 90 special exception applications received, almost 96% were recommended for approval by the Planning Commission, the highest approval rate since 2010 and the second highest on record. Also of note, 10 of the 90 applications were for amendments to previously approved special exceptions. Nine of those 10 related to the sale of alcoholic beverages, meaning 13% of alcohol-related special exceptions were for existing locations, down from 27% in 2013.

## Applications Reviewed in 2014 – Special Exceptions

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of special exception applications reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2014.

### Special Exception Applications, 2014



## Applications Reviewed in 2014 – Council Disposition

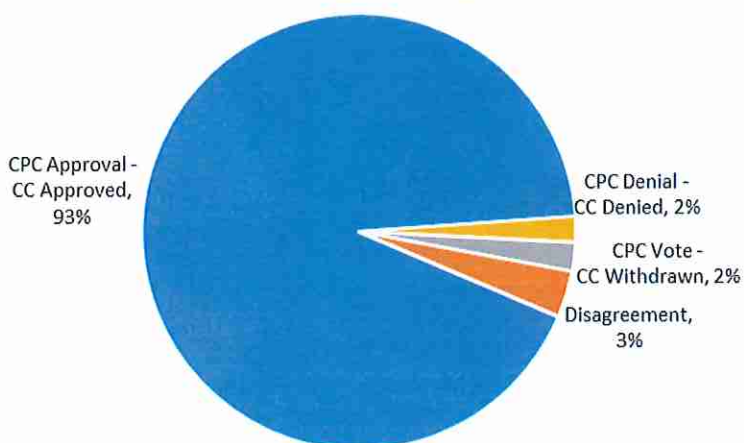
The following table reflects Norfolk City Council's actions relative to the Planning Commission's recommendations, by application type. Of the 179 items acted upon by the Planning Commission in 2014, 98.9% were recommended for approval. A similar 98.9% of the 179 items considered by City Council were approved, though the specific items approved and denied differed slightly from Planning Commission recommendations.

|                          | CPC Recommendation |          |              | City Council Resolution |          |           |              |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------|--------------|-------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
|                          | Approval           | Denial   | % App.       | Approved                | Denied   | Withdrawn | % App.       |
| Plan Amendments          | 16                 | 0        | 100.0%       | 16                      | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Rezoning                 | 31                 | 1        | 96.9%        | 32                      | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Special Exceptions       | 86                 | 1        | 98.9%        | 85                      | 2        | 0         | 97.7%        |
| Street Closures          | 17                 | 0        | 100.0%       | 17                      | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Text Amendments          | 23                 | 0        | 100.0%       | 23                      | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Development Certificates | 4                  | 0        | 100.0%       | 4                       | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>177</b>         | <b>2</b> | <b>98.9%</b> | <b>177</b>              | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>98.9%</b> |

In 2014, Planning Commission and City Council differed on four items. Two of these were items recommended for approval by Planning Commission that were ultimately denied by City Council – both related to a single convenience store. Two other items were recommended for denial by Planning Commission but approved by City Council – one auto sales establishment and one residential rezoning.

City Council generally agrees with the recommendations of the Planning Commission. Since 2012, City Council has followed Planning Commission's recommendation – for either approval or denial – over 94% of the time. An additional 2% of items were withdrawn prior to a vote from City Council. This means that the two bodies have disagreed only on about 2.5% – 18 of over 480 – of items, several of which were modified by the applicant following the Planning Commission's vote.

Planning Commission and City Council  
Actions, 2012-2014



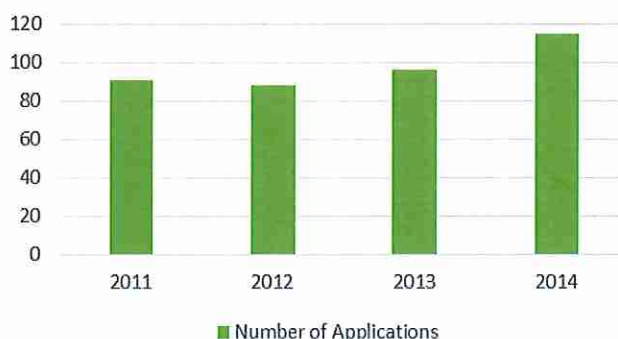
## Design Review/Architectural Review Board Items

2014 marked the inaugural year for Norfolk's new Architectural Review Board (ARB), which formally replaced the Design Review Committee on April 1, 2014. Planning Commission, which had the final say on all items considered by the Design Review Committee, only reviews selected ARB items, meaning the Commission only saw 58 items in 2014. Combined, the two groups reviewed 115 applications in 2014, a dramatic increase from the 96 items reviewed in 2013, and approved just under 90% of items, only a slight reduction from the 91% approved in 2013.

|                   | Total      | Percent       | Approved   | Denied   | Withdrawn | % Approved   |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|------------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Ghent COA*        | 41         | 35.7%         | 34         | 5        | 2         | 82.9%        |
| W. Freemason COA* | 6          | 5.2%          | 6          | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| Downtown COA*     | 29         | 25.2%         | 27         | 0        | 2         | 93.1%        |
| Private Projects  | 19         | 16.5%         | 16         | 0        | 3         | 84.2%        |
| Public Projects   | 20         | 17.4%         | 20         | 0        | 0         | 100.0%       |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>115</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>103</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>7</b>  | <b>89.6%</b> |

\* Certificate of Appropriateness

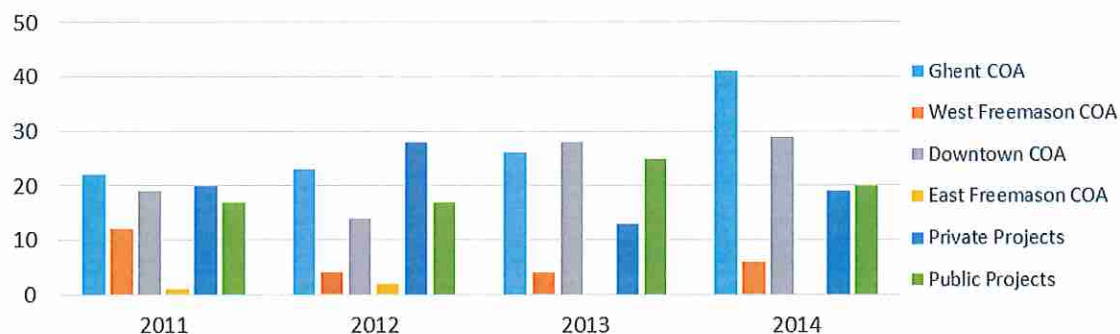
Applications Received, 2011-2014



As with planning and zoning items, the number of Design Review/ARB items reviewed annually has been steadily recovering from the bottom of the recession, rising well above the 88 items reviewed just two years ago in 2012. The Ghent Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) has been the most common type of application since 2011, edging out the Downtown COA on the strength of a spike in 2014.

Other application types have seen significant volatility over the past four years, with no clear trends emerging to date.

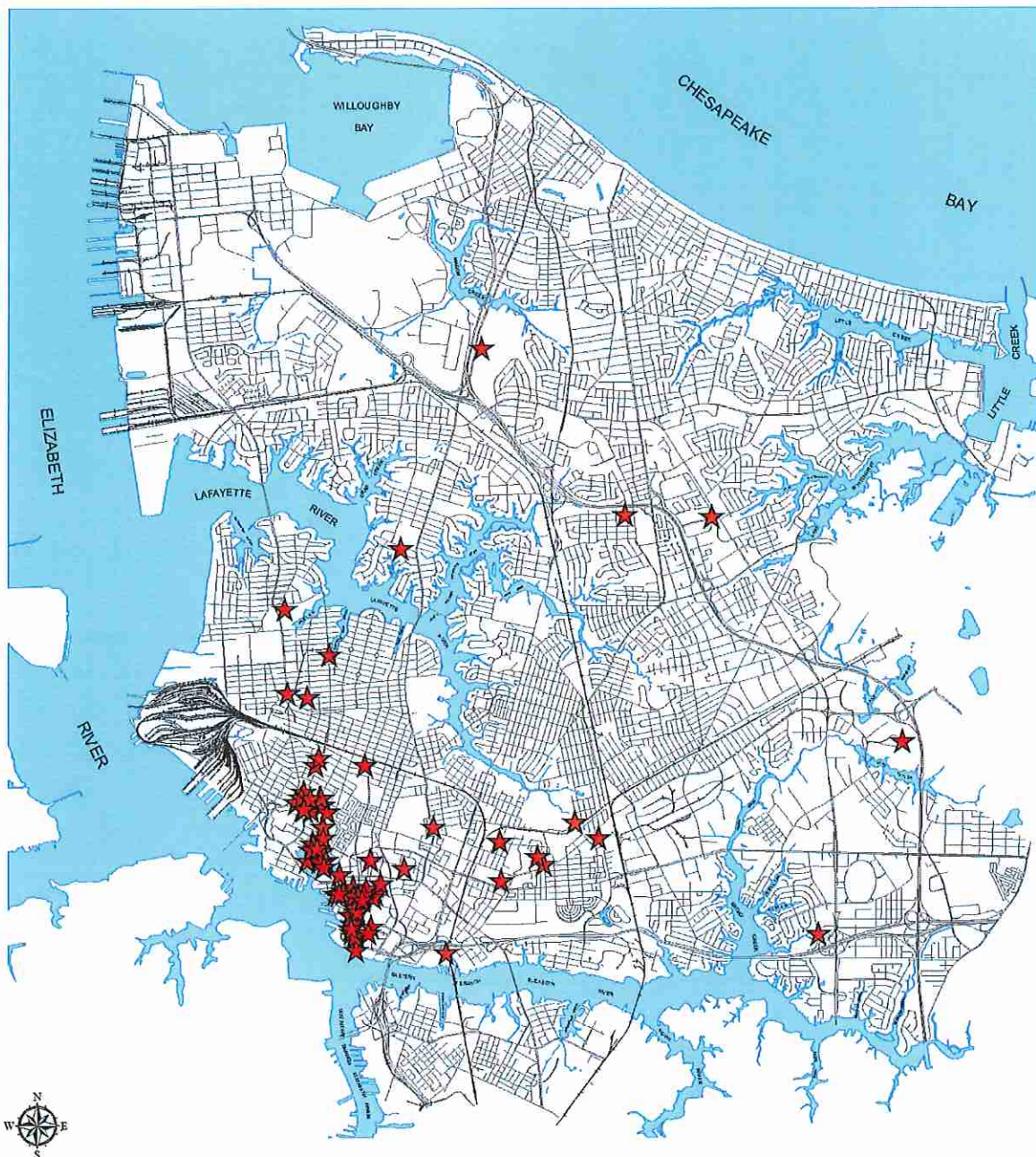
Design Review/ARB Activity, 2011-2014



## Design Review/Architectural Review Board Items

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of Design Review Committee and Architectural Review Board applications reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2014.

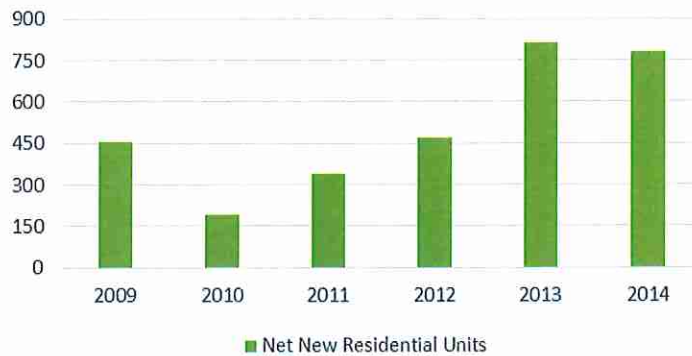
### Design Review/ARB Applications, 2014



## Building Permits Issued – 2014

2014 saw only a slight decline in the number of net new residential dwelling units, dropping from a post-recession peak of 813 in 2013 to 779 in 2014. Permits were issued for the construction of 1001 new residential units, including both single- and multi-family development, while 222 units were permitted for demolition. A

Net New Residential Units, 2009-2014



total of 4,220 new residential units have been permitted over the past six years, an average of 703 per year, while 1,171 units have been permitted for demolition, an average of 195 per year, a net on average of 508 dwelling units.

The numbers above include several major residential projects that received building permits in 2014. These included the following projects:

| First Permits Issued | Project   | Location                 |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| February             | 79-unit mixed-use apartment building (The James)                          | 345 Granby Street        |
| April                | 135-unit apartment building (The Seaboard)                                | 100 W. Plume Street      |
| June                 | 180-unit apartment complex (The Pointe at Pickett Farms Phases 2a and 2b) | 5400 Greenplain Road     |
| June                 | 67-unit apartment complex (Bolling Square Phase II)                       | 1001-1015 Bolling Avenue |
| July                 | 86-unit apartment building (The Rockefeller)                              | 130 Brooke Street        |

Several major non-residential projects were also permitted in 2014, including:

| First Permits Issued | Project   | Location                       |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| March                | 12,500 square foot preschool building (E3: Elevate Early Education)                   | 2901 Granby Street             |
| March                | 26,000 square foot retail center with 2-story medical office building (Ghent Station) | 924 W. 21 <sup>st</sup> Street |
| May                  | 42,000 square foot supermarket (Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market)                         | 3350 E. Princess Anne Road     |
| July                 | HRT bus transfer facility   | 434 St. Paul's Boulevard       |
| October              | New Hilton hotel (The Main)   | 100 E. Main Street             |

## Projects Completed – 2014

2014 once again saw the completion of multiple major projects and the opening of many new or relocated businesses. Most of these projects received some form of Planning Commission approval over the past few years and, as major construction projects often take some time to finish, finally opened during the past year. Below are several projects that were completed in 2014.



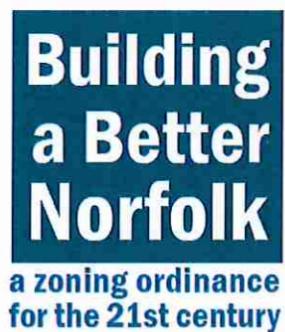
## Projects Completed – 2014

Included on these pages are the Slover Library Downtown, the Kroc Center in Broad Creek, a new medical office pavilion at DePaul Medical Center, new residential on Granby Street Downtown, three new grocery stores – The Fresh Market on W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Harris-Teeter at Ward's Corner, and Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market on E. Princess Anne Road – and several smaller businesses, including small local businesses The Parlor on Granby and Eva's, and a new CVS store on Hampton Boulevard.



## Plans and Other Projects

The Planning Department, with the support of the Planning Commission, remained busy in 2014, focusing largely on the first steps in implementing *plaNorfolk2030*, the city's new comprehensive plan, which was adopted in mid-2013. Those steps ranged from the big – beginning the wholesale re-write of the Zoning Ordinance – to the small – making a number of minor adjustments to the plan and the existing Zoning Ordinance. 2014 also saw a continued focus on the city's flood regulations, marked by the adoption of some new flood maps and the implementation of design standards for flood prone properties.



**Building  
a Better  
Norfolk**  
a zoning ordinance  
for the 21st century

Probably the most significant step in implementing *plaNorfolk2030* began in 2014 with the kickoff of the city's Zoning Ordinance Rewrite process. This process, which is anticipated to take up to three years to complete, will result in Norfolk's first completely new Zoning Ordinance since 1992. The public kickoff to the project took place in September, where the consulting team guiding the city through the process – led by Clarion Associates of Chapel Hill, NC – presented and received input on a series of potential themes around which the new ordinance will be developed. The project will accelerate in early 2015, when the consulting team will present an analysis of the existing ordinance and the related city processes along with a proposed outline for the new ordinance.

In addition to preparing for a new Zoning Ordinance, the city also made several revisions, large and small, to the existing ordinance. The most prominent of these was a wholesale re-write of the parking regulations. The new regulations represent the first significant implementation of *plaNorfolk2030*'s "Character District" concept. They were adopted by City Council in March. Other revisions included modified development standards for the Granby-Monticello corridor, new standards for fences in residential districts, and revised criteria for auto repair and sales uses and for temporary signs, among others. Many of these revisions resulted directly from the recommendations of *plaNorfolk2030*, while others were developed alongside adjustments to the plan itself.

The city also took two big steps in 2014 related to flood mitigation. First was the adoption of a new flood insurance rate map for Downtown Norfolk. This map resulted from the recertification of the Downtown Floodwall, greatly improving upon the accuracy of the old map and introducing a new AH flood zone. Additionally, 2014 marked the implementation of new design standards for properties within the Special Flood Hazard Area. Included in those standards was the requirement to elevate new construction three feet above the FEMA minimum standard. Since the new standards were adopted, over 50 new buildings constructed within the floodplain have been built to the higher elevation.

## City Planning Commission Work Program – 2015

As the Planning Commission transitions into another year, there are many projects currently underway or planned for initiation in 2015. Below is a list of projects Planning Department staff and the Planning Commission should be working on over the coming year. While this may not represent all projects and tasks the Commission works on in 2015, it is intended to be a snapshot at the beginning of the year of what activities are anticipated.

| Project  | Projected Project Timeframe |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Zoning Ordinance Update – comprehensive re-write of the Zoning Ordinance   | Completion by mid-2017      |
| <i>plaNorfolk2030</i> Annual Review – bi-annual review of plan implementation  | Completion by Spring 2015   |
| Flood Insurance Rate Map changes – revised citywide maps   | Completion by early-2016    |
| Community Rating System strategy – strategy for reducing Norfolk's CRS rating  | Completion by Summer 2015   |
| Fort Norfolk ULI Study follow-up – evaluation of potential zoning changes  | TBD                         |
| St. Paul's area zoning study – evaluation of the zoning districts east of St. Paul's Boulevard   | Completion by early-2016    |
| Broad Creek area zoning study – evaluation of the zoning districts in the Broad Creek area, specifically along E. Virginia Beach Boulevard   | Completion by early-2016    |
| Emerging districts plan amendments – establishing policy direction for six emerging commercial areas (Arts District, Chelsea, Five Points, North Colley, Riverview, and 35 <sup>th</sup> Street) | Completion by Fall 2015     |
| Healthy Community plan amendments – potential new chapter in <i>plaNorfolk2030</i>   | Completion by Fall 2015     |
| Housing Strategy/Poverty Commission policy changes – coordination with City Manager's Office and NRHA to implement Poverty Commission recommendations  | TBD                         |
| 100 Resilient Cities update – status update and consideration of policy changes  | TBD                         |
| Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategic Plan – analysis of key citywide bicycle and pedestrian policies and improvements  | Completion by mid-2015      |
| TIDE Extension Study – study of potential routes to connect transit to Naval Station Norfolk   | Completion by mid-2015      |
| TIDE Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement – formal study of locally-preferred alternative(s)   | Completion by 2018          |
| Arts District use table review and update – consideration of potential new uses and regulations for the Norfolk Arts District  | Completion by early 2015    |
| HRPDC Regional Visioning – staff and Commission input on a regional vision for Hampton Roads as part of a process led by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission                          | Completion by early 2015    |

| Project   | Projected Project Timeframe |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Military Circle area plan/zoning changes – potential grant-funded project to analyze southern portion of Military Highway corridor for potential Urban Development Area designation | TBD                         |
| Area Planning Process – analysis of Norfolk’s neighborhoods to develop list of potential area plans   | TBD                         |
| Renewable energy strategy – analysis of best practices and development of expanded policies for <i>plaNorfolk2030</i> (potential intern project)                                    | TBD                         |
| Public access to shoreline – analysis of best practices and development of expanded policies for <i>plaNorfolk2030</i> (potential intern project)                                   | TBD                         |
| West Little Creek Road parking analysis – consideration of potential strategies to address the lack of off-street parking   | Completion by Spring 2015   |
| Public Art – discussion of Public Arts Commission processes and upcoming projects   | TBD                         |
| Coordination efforts with Military – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local military facilities   | TBD                         |
| Coordination efforts with Colleges/Universities – discussion of how staff coordinates planning efforts with representatives of local colleges and universities                      | TBD                         |
| Shore Drive Land Use/Zoning Study – an evaluation of the land uses and zoning districts in the area around Shore Drive between Little Creek Road and Pretty Lake                    | Completion by Mid-2015      |
| Approval of Certified Local Government status   | Completion by Mid-2015      |
| Administrative approval for some Certificates of Appropriateness  | Completion by Fall 2015     |
| Architectural Review Board application guidelines – establishment of guidelines for window replacement and demolition   | Completion by Summer 2015   |
| Historic preservation recognition awards  | Completion by early 2016    |
| Joint Planning Commission/Economic Development Authority meeting(s)   | Periodic briefing(s)        |
| Joint Planning Commission/City Council meeting(s)   | Periodic briefing(s)        |